Exploring and protecting waterways

WILD GUARDIANS

COMIC



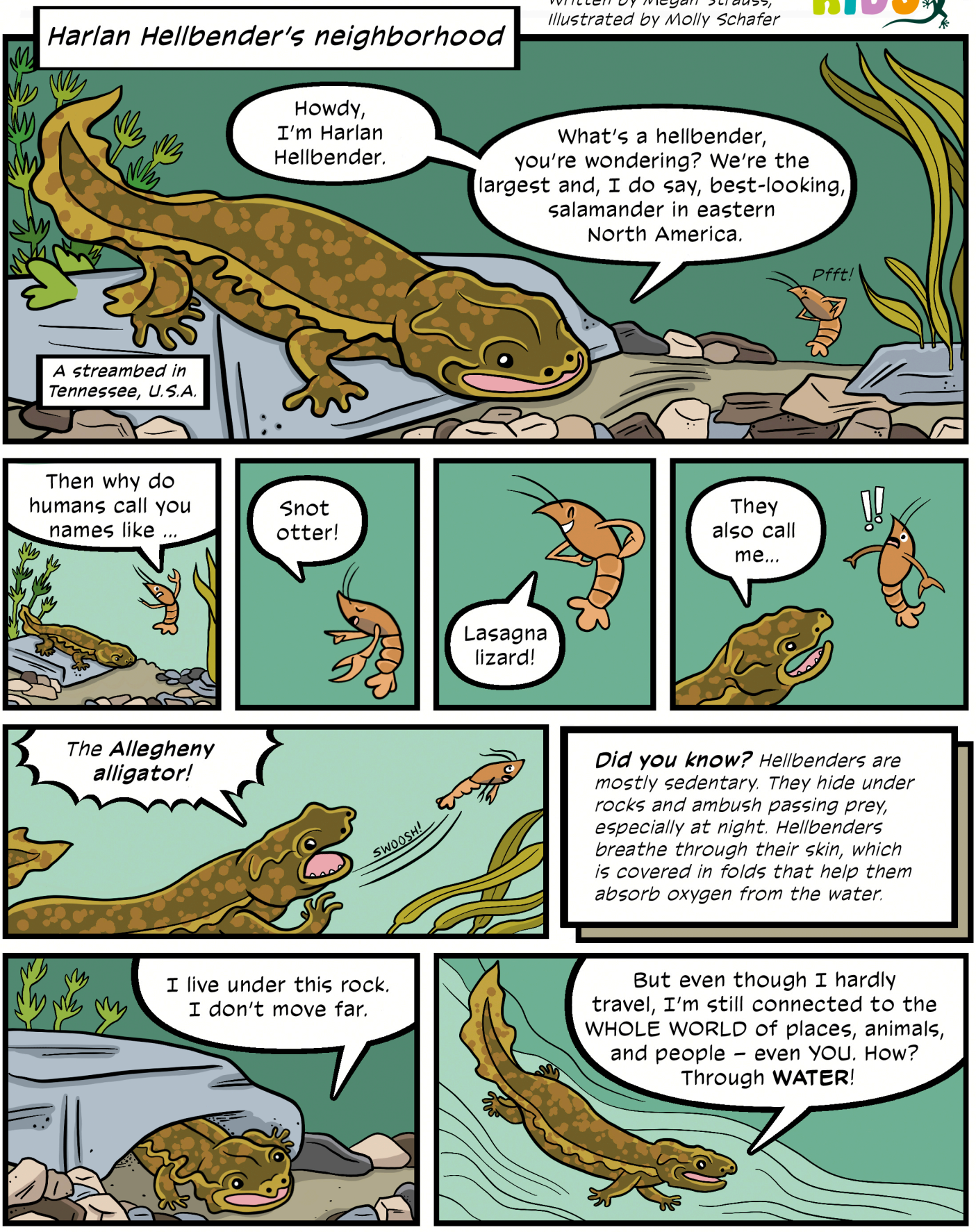


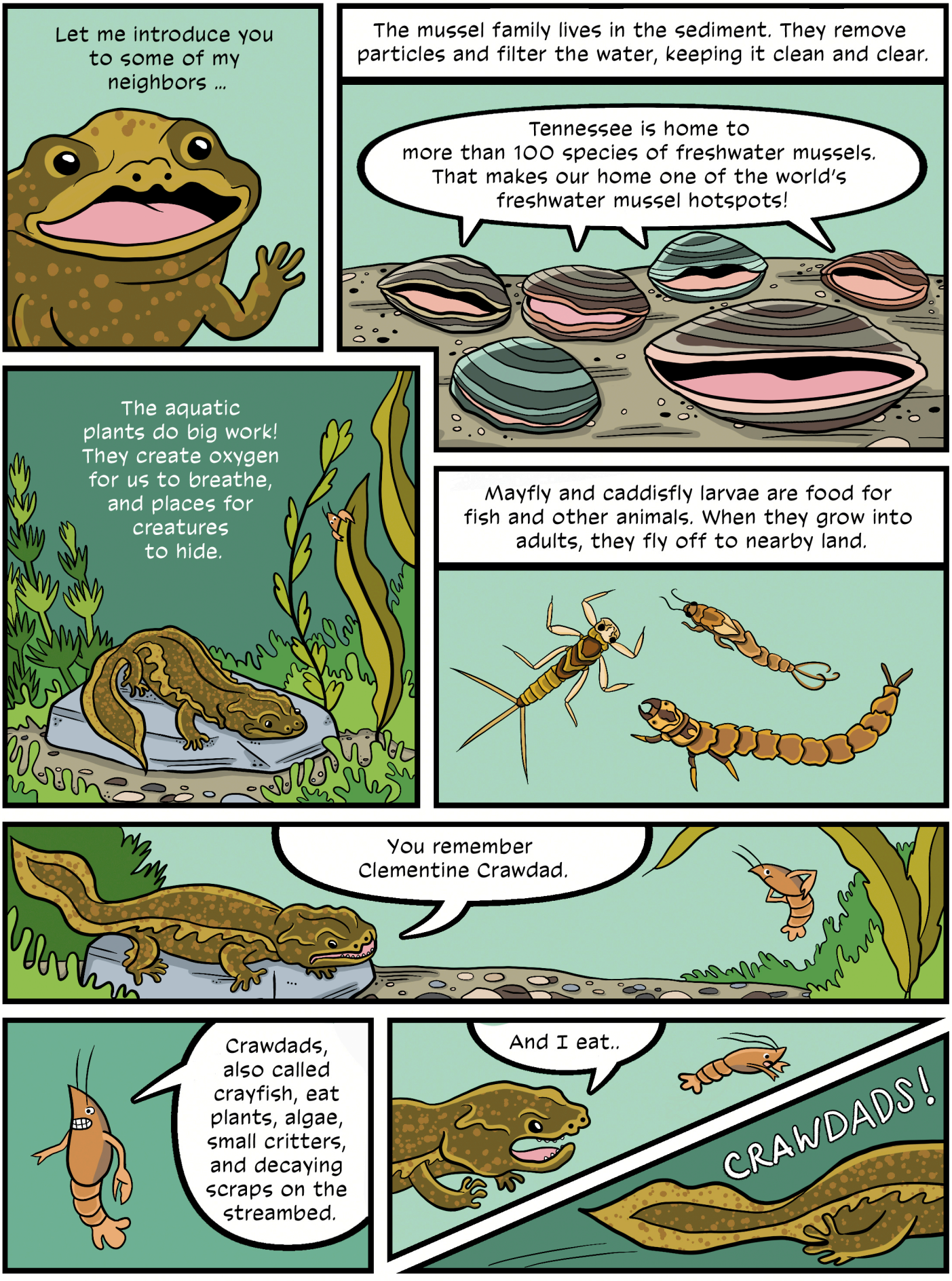
MONGABAY KIDS

HOW WATER CONNECTS US

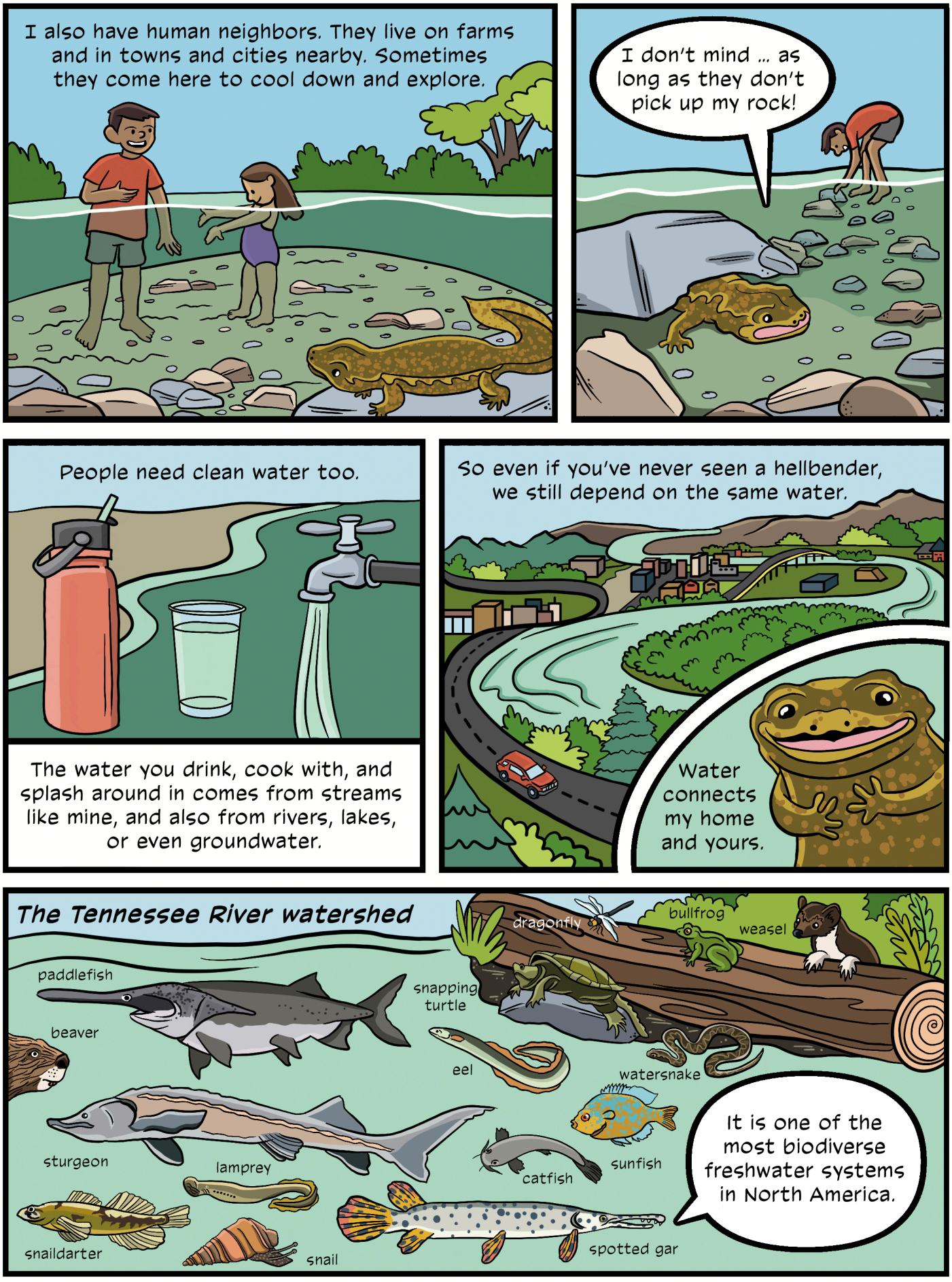
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MONGABAY KIDS

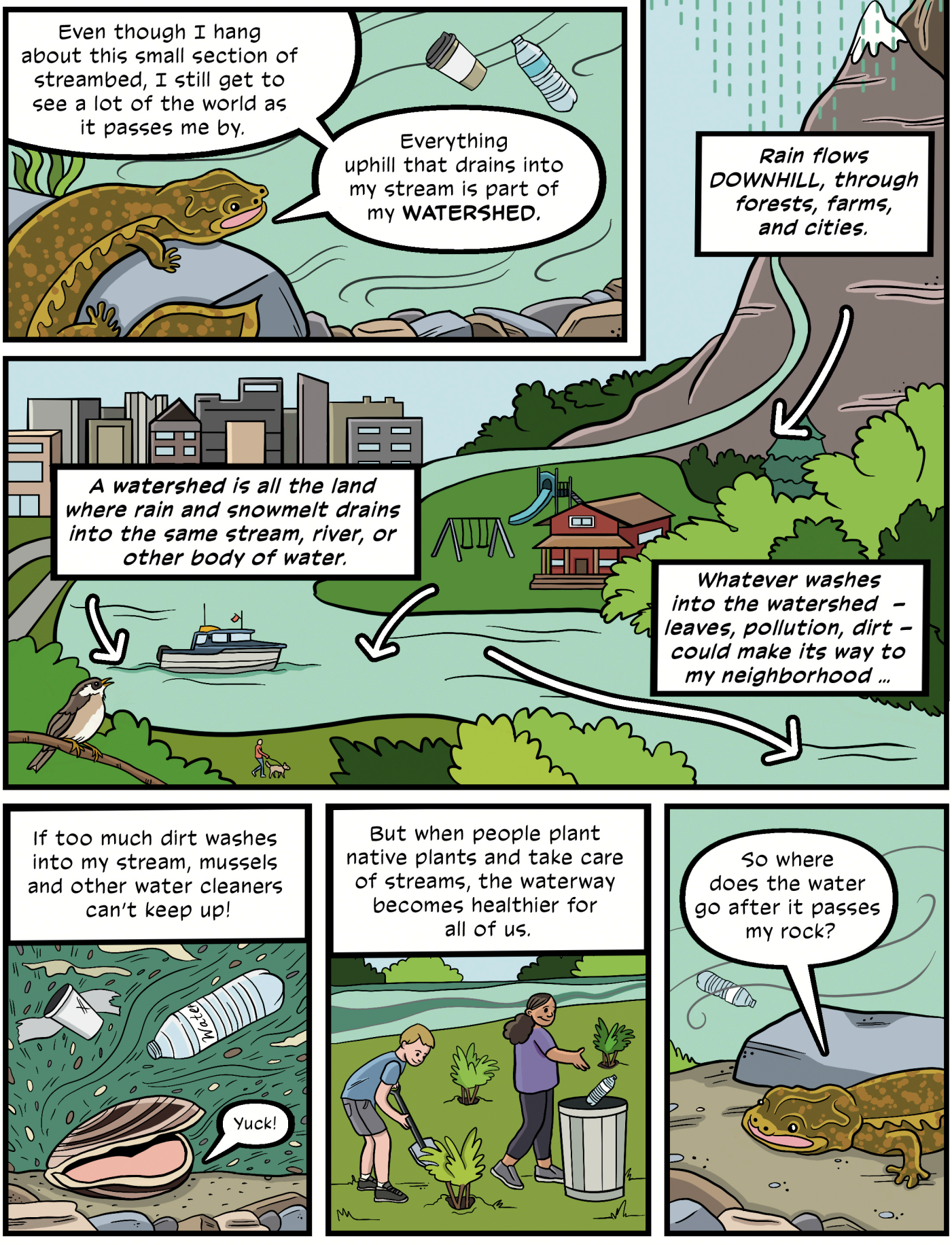



Let me introduce you to some of my neighbors ...
The mussel family lives in the sediment. They remove particles and filter the water, keeping it clean and clear.
Tennessee is home to more than 100 species of freshwater mussels. That makes our home one of the world's freshwater mussel hotspots!
The aquatic plants do big work! They create oxygen for us to breathe, and places for creatures to hide.
Mayfly and caddisfly larvae are food for fish and other animals. When they grow into adults, they fly off to nearby land.
You remember Clementine Crawdad.
Crawdads, also called crayfish, eat plants, algae, small critters, and decaying scraps on the streambed.
And I eat..
CRAWDADS!


Better luck next time, snot otter
Oh, well.
All the animals in my neighborhood have a role to play.
If any of them are removed, the stream community changes.
TENNESSEE RIVER FOOD WEB
Imagine: What would your community be like without teachers, doctors, or farmers?
Not all my neighbors are in the river. Muskrats and raccoons live on land. These furballs visit to drink and fish out mussels for a snack.
Howdy!
The trees and shrubs on our streambanks have roots that prevent soil from eroding into the water. They also provide shade on a hot day. When their leaves fall, they become food ... for tasty crawdads.


I also have human neighbors. They live on farms and in towns and cities nearby. Sometimes they come here to cool down and explore.
I don't mind ... as long as they don't pick up my rock!
People need clean water too.
The water you drink, cook with, and splash around in comes from streams like mine, and also from rivers, lakes, or even groundwater.
So even if you've never seen a hellbender, we still depend on the same water.
Water connects my home and yours.
The Tennessee River watershed
dragonfly
bullfrog
weasel
paddlefish
snapping turtle
beaver
eel
watersnake
sturgeon
lamprey
catfish
sunfish
snaildarter
snail
spotted gar
It is one of the most biodiverse freshwater systems in North America.

Where does water flow?



Some water flows into rivers and collects in lakes or wetlands. Some of it seeps down through the soil and rocks deep underground and becomes groundwater.

And, believe it or not, some of the water flowing past my rock today may someday travel all the way to the ocean.

Water connects all life on Earth

But that's not the whole picture ... If you zoom out far enough you can see just how water connects us. Most of Earth's surface – about 70% – is covered with it!

But less than <1% of that water is available to humans for drinking.*

*much of this is locked up in glacier ice or underground

3% fresh water*

97% salt water

Water vapor rises into the air and forms clouds. ***CONDENSATION***

Clouds release water as rain or snow. ***PRECIPITATION***

THE WATER CYCLE

The sun heats water. Some surface water evaporates. ***EVAPORATION***

Water flows downhill and collects in rivers, lakes, and oceans. ***COLLECTION***

Water also connects us with the past. The same water has been cycling around Earth for millions of years. The water I swim in and the water you drink today may have once fallen out of an ancient cloud and been drunk by a thirsty dinosaur!

Taking care of our shared water




Plant native plants
Plant native trees, flowers, and shrubs, and help remove invasive plants. Healthy plants protect streambanks and provide habitat for wildlife.
Build a rain garden
A rain garden helps soak up rainwater before it carries pollution into waterways.
Save water
Take shorter showers and turn off water while brushing your teeth.
Spread the word
Tell your friends and family why clean waterways matter and how everyone can help protect them.
SAVE A CRITTER DON'T LITTER!
KEEP OUR STREAMS CLEAN
SAVE THE HELLBENDER
Thanks, neighbor!
The water is looking cleaner already.

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